

**ANDREW MAHONEY** Statement

May 3, 2018

1:45 PM

Telephone Interview

ANDY knows CHRIS and has worked with him for some time. ANDY works for UAF in Fairbanks and was at the camp the entire duration it was open. The day of the accident, he had helped load the aircraft and then headed back to the camp and did not witness the accident.

ANDY said it seemed like there was a lot of volume loaded into the Twin Otter. He said it took two or three men to load each snow blower into the doorway of the plane, as they were quite heavy. He said the load was strapped down and secured prior to the plane departing.

BRENT GILLESPIE STATEMENT

May 2, 2018

9:18 AM

Telephone Interview

BRENT GILLESPIE is an Arctic Submarine Laboratory employee in their Engineering Department. He retired from the US Navy after 26 years in the Submarine Service. He was at the camp for 4 ½ weeks and built and maintained the camp. The accident occurred on the last day of camp operations. That day they were getting groups of people and equipment transported back to Deadhorse Airport.

CHRIS EVANS, another employee, had been at the intersection area of the two runways to take photos of the departing Canadian Twin Otter. He was about 20' back from the edge of the runway. The Canadian Twin Otter took off and CHRIS took photos as it went by. The Canadian airplane took off quickly, with the wheels off the ground in about 300'. The airplane leveled off about 8' off the ground and accelerated to the intersection area, when it did a steep climb.

TRAVIS was going to do the same thing with the Bald Mountain Twin Otter, and went to the same place to take pictures that CHRIS had been. BRENT and HOWARD were about 60' back from TRAVIS, with both of them on snowmobiles. The plan was for BRENT to give TRAVIS a ride on the snowmobile back to the camp after he took photos. When the Bald Mountain Twin Otter took off, TRAVIS was kneeling behind the 4' snow berm.

The Bald Mountain airplane took off in 300' to 400', like the Canadian one, but then leveled off only 2' to 3' off the ground. BRENT even said out loud to HOWARD, "Wow, he's staying really low" when he saw it. The plane accelerated and then about 150' from TRAVIS made a very fast bank to the left. He said it reminded him of when an airplanes "waves its wings" when it does a flyby. The aircraft flew towards TRAVIS and the left wing came down and there was a big "poof" of snow. TRAVIS feel back to his right side (not backwards). The plane flew past them and then came back around and landed.

BRENT ran to where TRAVIS was. His head was laid open and his scalp was laying back like a toupee. TRAVIS was conscious and kept asking "what happened"? HOWARD went to get help and returned with the Navy Camp Doctor. BRENT stayed with TRAVIS, kept him stabilized, and rode with TRAVIS in the helicopter on the medevac.

BRENT said he did not talk with the pilots, who returned with the aircraft. He said there was significant damage to the last 10 feet of the left wing. There was a "collision spot" on TRAVIS's skull that was about 3/8 to ½" wide, and about 2" long. There are four "hinges" that drop down from the wings on the Twin Otter near the ailerons and it appears that is what hit him.

**CHRISTOPHER POLASHENSKI Statement**

May 2, 2018

10:30AM

Telephone Interview

CHRIS works for the US Army Cold Regions Research & Engineering Lab (CRREL) as a DOD / Civilian employee. He studies sea ice and glaciers around the world. He has been with them since 2011. He was at the Ice Camp to monitor the sea ice for cracks and stability. He has extensive experience in flying in and out of remote locations, and estimated 300 – 400 hours riding experience in Twin Otters. He has about 300 hours riding in helicopters in just the last year or so. He was at the camp for the first four days it was open, and then the last two days.

CHRIS was a passenger on the Bald Mountain Twin Otter. He said that in his opinion, the aircraft was over gross weight and he took notes afterward to document that. He said that when the plane came out of Deadhorse, everything was carefully weighed. Out of the Ice Camp, nothing was weighed. He said the Honda Snowblowers were fairly heavy and it took three workers to load them one at a time into the plane. He and his co-worker ANDREW MAHONEY had helped load the aircraft. He said the following items were on the aircraft, in addition to the two pilots:

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Ten bags of flooring @ 100 lbs each  | 1000 lbs        |
| Three snowblowers (Honda track type) @ about 300 lbs each  | 900 lbs         |
| Three passengers with bags @ 250 lbs each  | 750 lbs         |
| His scientific gear, which he had weighed at 650 lbs   | 650 lbs         |
| 32 boxes of food (Tray Heater Rations), with an average weight of 40lbs each (3 types, 20 lbs, 40 lbs, 70 lbs) | <u>1200 lbs</u> |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4500 lbs</b> |

He said two of his co-workers, MATTHEW and JULIE PARNO, were passengers with him. They sat in the window seats on the left side. He had a window to see out of. The plane taxied to the runway. He saw the First Officer was controlling the power levers on the plane during takeoff.

He said they took off and then flew low, accumulating speed over the runway. They then “dipped a wing” and flew towards the people standing by the runway. He said it “had the appearance of cowboy flying”, and fits with that type of culture that he has occasionally observed in the past. It looked like they were trying to fly close to the people. He said there was no wind and they were not hit by a gust of wind at any time.

He said there was a noise that sounded like “donk”, and then the wing hit the ice and there was a big puff of snow. The airplane leveled off and it seemed like the pattern they flew to come back to land was made with turns using only the rudder. The airplane maintained its level attitude all the way around, and they came back and landed and pulled up near where the victim was on the ice.

There was blood everywhere. It looked like a fatality, and both pilots were ashen white in the face. CHRIS helped with EMS with the victim until the Doctor arrived. CHRIS took photos of the scene, including the ditch that the wing had cut through to where the victim was located. CHRIS sent me 11 photos.

HOWARD REESE Statement

5/2/2018

Telephone Interview

12:20PM Alaska Time

HOWARD REESE is an Arctic Submarine Laboratory employee and the Ice Camp Operations Officer. He was in charge of the camp and had the runway cleared on the sea ice, using a combination of snow blowers, and snow shovels. This year it was quite labor-intensive, due to drifting snow.

HOWARD had inquired of a Casa pilot as to how wide the runway needed to be. The Casa pilot had requested 60' wide, and so Howard made the runway between 60 and 70 feet wide. The longest runway, which ran in a generally NorthEast / SouthWest direction, was approximately 2400' long. The shorter runway, which intersects the longer one in about the middle, was about 1500' long. (See attached photo of runway area)

There were snow berms about two (2) feet tall along the edge of the runway, with a snow berm about four (4) at the intersection area. The area where the accident occurred was at the intersection area. The snow berm in that section was about four feet tall, and about 10 to 15' wide. This was the section that TRAVIS, the victim, had been behind when taking photos.

HOWARD had assisted in loading the Bald Mountain Twin Otter. There were the two pilots, and three passengers. The cargo loaded with estimated weights included:

|                               |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| 3 Snow Blowers, @ 70 lbs each | 210 lbs |
| Project Gear @ 250 lbs        | 250 lbs |
| Flooring                      | 210 lbs |
| Passenger Bags                | 300 lbs |

The total of the cargo was a Maximum of 1000 lbs.

HOWARD had watched the Canadian Twin Otter depart first, from the area of the runway intersection, along with BRENT GILLESPIE. They were both about 60' behind TRAVIS, about 80' from the edge of the runway. (After the incident, they measured the distance from TRAVIS to the edge of the runway by stepping it off, and it was 20') The Canadian Twin Otter took off towards the NorthEast on the long runway. It was off the ground well before the intersection and leveled off somewhere between 8 and 12' off the ground, accelerating, and then climbed quickly, and made a right turn towards Prudhoe Bay.

The Bald Mountain Twin Otter taxied to the same runway as the Canadian. TRAVIS gave the airplane a "thumbs up" signal, and crouched down behind the snow berm, holding his camera up over the top. That was when HOWARD realized TRAVIS had made an arrangement with the pilots for taking photos. The Twin Otter started its take off, and came off the ground about 300' prior to reaching the intersection where TRAVIS was. The aircraft leveled off maybe six (6) feet off the ground, building up airspeed. Just before the intersection, the aircraft made a quick hard bank turn to the left, and in the turn lost maybe a little altitude. The left wing impacted the snowbank and hit TRAVIS. The plane then flew right over the top of them (BRENT and HOWARD). It scared him that it was so low, and estimated it was 50 or 60' high at that point. It came back around and landed back on the ice runway.

HOWARD went to get help while BRENT stayed with TRAVIS. HOWARD did not talk with the pilots.



May 10, 2018

10:05 AM

Telephone Interview

**INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW PARNO:** Matthew is an Applied Mathematician who does site modeling for the CCREL. He was working on this project with CHRIS PALESHENSKI and his wife JULIE PARNO. They had flown out in the morning from Deadhorse on the Canadian Twin Otter and were returning this evening in the Bald Mountain Twin Otter.

He, CHRIS and JULIE stayed in the vicinity of the aircraft as it was being loaded. He said that people were handing items into the doorway of the plane and the pilots were arranging it and strapping it down. They all ended up sitting on the left side of the plane, CHRIS in front, JULIE behind CHRIS, and he ended up in the back, behind the back door.

He remembered that when they came out of Deadhorse, the cargo loading seemed more "orderly". He said there were awkward sized pieces of cargo in the back. There was several packages of flooring from the tents that were in back near him. He did not recall an exact number but thought it might be three or four.

When they were all loaded, the pilot came back and gave a safety briefing, and then they taxied out to the end of the runway and took off. He said the takeoff seemed normal (similar to the takeoff out of Deadhorse on the Canadian plane) but then the plane "tilted to the left". He said it was not a gradual turn, but "abrupt". It felt like "a fast version of a normal airplane turn". It was not rough, like they had hit turbulence or a wind gust, but felt "intentional".

They almost immediately felt a "thud" and then the plane straightened out. The plane made a slow circle back around and landed. After the thud, the airplane felt like it flew smooth and controlled. From his seat, after the "thud", he could see the left wingtip bent upwards. They landed without incident and taxied back and that was when he saw the man laying on the ground. They got out of the plane and CHRIS helped with EMS with the victim until the doctor arrived. He and JULIE got their jackets together to help keep the victim warm.

After the incident, the three of them were discussing what happened. CHRIS felt like it was caused by the pilot "messing around". MATTHEW remembered a conversation he had overheard before the flight, from the the pilot with the beard, who sat up front on the left. The pilot had been talking with some of the Ice Camp people, and talking about "crazy takeoffs and landings they had done".